

Cold! *or* Allergies? which is it...

? The common cold and allergies have similar symptoms, making it easy for people to mistake one for the other. However, the two can be differentiated by cause and duration. A cold is caused by a virus that is contagious and can be spread from person to person. Allergy symptoms are caused by hypersensitive reactions to particular substances called allergens—such as pollen, mold, and dust mites—that may trigger a reaction from the body's immune system. While a cold generally lasts between 3 and 14 days, allergies can cause symptoms for weeks, months or even year round, depending on exposure to allergy triggers.

Cold Symptoms

- ▶ Nasal congestion
- ▶ Sneezing
- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Aches and pains
- ▶ Mild fever (rarely)

Allergy Symptoms

- ▶ Nasal congestion
- ▶ Sneezing
- ▶ Itchy eyes
- ▶ Cough
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Fatigue

Treatment

The common cold is usually treated with rest, fluids and over-the-counter decongestants. These remedies might relieve symptoms, but cannot cure colds. Unfortunately, a cold has to run its course. Like colds, allergies cannot be cured; however, symptoms can be prevented or managed. The best way to prevent allergy symptoms is to determine which allergens trigger symptoms and then to minimize or eliminate exposure to those allergens. Left untreated, allergies can lead to more serious conditions including sinusitis, asthma and ear infections. Allergies are generally treatable with a series of allergy shots or medication.

If cold symptoms persist for longer than two weeks or you suspect that you suffer from allergies, contact a physician for diagnosis and treatment options.

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236

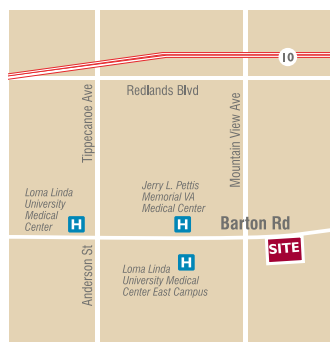
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